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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/691,343	10/18/2000	C. Alexander Turner JR.	LEX-0070-USA	3960

24231 7590 11/06/2002

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EXAMINER

DEBERRY, REGINA M

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
1647	

DATE MAILED: 11/06/2002

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)
	09/691,343	TURNER ET AL.
	Examiner	Art Unit
	Regina M. DeBerry	1647

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 27 August 2002.

2a) This action is **FINAL**. 2b) This action is non-final.

3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4) Claim(s) 4-8 is/are pending in the application.

4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.

5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.

6) Claim(s) 4-8 is/are rejected.

7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.

8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10) The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.

Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

11) The proposed drawing correction filed on _____ is: a) approved b) disapproved by the Examiner.

If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.

12) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

13) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).

a) All b) Some * c) None of:

1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.

2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.

3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

14) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application).

a) The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.

15) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

Attachment(s)

1) Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)

2) Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)

3) Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) 5.

4) Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). _____.

5) Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)

6) Other: _____.

Detailed Action

The Group and/or Art Unit location of your application in the PTO has changed.

To aid in correlating any papers for this application, all further correspondence regarding this application should be directed to Group Art Unit 1647, Regina M. DeBerry.

Status of Application, Amendments and/or Claims

The information disclosure statement filed 10 May 2001 (Paper No. 5) was received and complies with the provisions of 37 CFR §§1.97 and 1.98. It has been placed in the application file and the information referred to therein has been considered as to the merits.

The amendment filed 27 August 2002 (Paper No. 10) has been entered in full. Claims 1-3 were cancelled. New claims 7-8 were added. Applicant's election without traverse of Group III (claims 4-6 and SEQ ID NO:6 and SEQ ID NO:7) in Paper No. 10 is acknowledged. Claims 4-8 are under examination.

Inventorship

In view of the papers filed 30 August 2002 (Paper No. 10), the inventorship in this nonprovisional application has been changed by the deletion of Gregory Donoho, Michael C. Nehls, Erin Hilbun, Brian Zambrowicz and Arthur T. Sands. The corrections will be made to the file jacket and PTO PALM data to reflect the inventorship.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 101

35 U.S.C. 101 reads as follows:

Whoever invents or discovers any new and useful process, machine, manufacture, or composition of matter, or any new and useful improvement thereof, may obtain a patent therefor, subject to the conditions and requirements of this title.

Claims 4-8 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 because the claimed invention is not supported by either a credible, specific and substantial asserted utility or a well established utility.

The claims are directed to isolated polynucleotides (SEQ ID NO:6) and isolated polynucleotides encoding polypeptides (SEQ ID NO:7) of novel human proteins (NHPs). The specification states that NHPs share structural motifs typical of human secreted proteins (page 2, lines 8-9). NHPs share structural similarity with animal chordins, NEL protein, and thrombospondin (page 2, lines 13-24). The specification states that when secreted, the NHPs typically exert physiological effects by interacting with receptors to produce a biological effect. Interfering with the binding of a NHP product to its cognate receptor effects NHP-mediated processes (page 4, lines 20-30).

The specification does not disclose any information regarding true ligands or functional characteristics/mechanisms of action of NHPs. The specification fails to disclose the physiological effects that occur when NHP binds its receptor. The specification does not disclose a receptor for NHP. Ligand-binding experiments and/or second-messenger assays were never executed to conclusively discern a function for NHP. Generally, the art acknowledges that function cannot be predicted based solely on structural similarity to a protein found in the sequence databases. For example,

Skolnick *et al.* (2000, Trends in Biotech. 18:34-39) state that knowing the protein structure by itself is insufficient to annotate a number of functional classes, and is also insufficient for annotating the specific details of protein function (see Box 2, p. 36). The assertion that NHPs has biological activities similar to known protein which are cited in the instant specification cannot be accepted in the absence of supporting evidence, because the relevant literature reports examples of polypeptide families wherein individual members have distinct, and sometimes even opposite, biological activities. For example, Tischer *et al.* (U.S. Patent 5,194,596) establishes that VEGF (a member of the PDGF, or platelet-derived growth factor, family) is mitogenic for vascular endothelial cells but not for vascular smooth muscle cells. This is opposite to the mitogenic activity of naturally occurring PDGF which is mitogenic for vascular smooth muscle cells but not for vascular endothelial cells (column 2, line 46 to column 3, line 2). Yan *et al.* (Science 2000) establishes that a change in two amino acids in an epithelial morphogen regulates binding to two distinct receptors. In addition, polynucleotides are known in the art to encode polypeptides, yet the polypeptides have no known function.

The specification asserts several utilities, however the claimed invention lacks specific and substantial utility. Some of the asserted utilities include methods to screen for agonists and/or antagonists of NHP, using probes to isolate other cDNAs, screening for binding proteins and making antibodies. Agonist/antagonist assays are performed for any receptor-ligand pair when the physiological role of each is unknown. Antibodies can be made to any protein. A probe is a general utility that would be applicable to the broad class of the invention. A specific utility amounts to more than a starting point for

further research and investigation. It does not require or constitute carrying out further research to identify or reasonably confirm what the practical use might ultimately be.

The specification states that a variety of methods can be employed for the diagnostic and prognostic evaluation of disorders related to NHP function. The specification establishes no connection between any disease/condition. For example is NHP mutated, deleted or overexpressed. There is no correlation to the predisposition of a particular disease and the claimed invention. The specification does not disclose any working examples demonstrating that the instant invention was used to treat any disease. Further experimentation is required before this asserted utility is substantial. Indeed, the utility of a claimed DNA does not necessarily depend on the function of the encoded gene product, if the claimed DNA had a specific and substantial utility such as it hybridizes near a disease-associated gene or it has a gene regulating activity. The specification, however, fails to disclose that the DNA of the instant application can be linked to a specific disease or gene regulating activity.

The instant application has failed to provide guidance as to how one of skill in the art could use the claimed invention in a way that constitutes a specific or substantial utility. The proposed uses of the claimed invention are simply starting points for further research and investigation into potential practical uses of the claimed invention.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

The following is a quotation of the first paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall contain a written description of the invention, and of the manner and process of making and using it, in such full, clear, concise, and exact terms as to enable any person skilled in the

Art Unit: 1647

art to which it pertains, or with which it is most nearly connected, to make and use the same and shall set forth the best mode contemplated by the inventor of carrying out his invention.

Claims 4-8 are also rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph. Specifically, since the claimed invention is not supported by either a credible, specific and substantial asserted utility or a well established utility for the reasons set forth above, one skilled in the art clearly would not know how to use the claimed invention.

In addition, the specification is not enabled for fragments of polynucleotides. It is known for nucleic acids as well as proteins, that even a single nucleotide or amino acid change or mutation can destroy the function of the biomolecule in many cases (Wells, 1990, Biochemistry 29:8509-8517). The disclosure provides no guidance as to which regions of the sequence would be tolerant of modification and which would not, and it provides no working example of any variant sequence which would be within the claims. Reasonable correlation must exist between the scope of the claims and scope of enablement set forth. Without sufficient guidance, the changes which can be made in the structure and still maintain sufficient activity is unpredictable and the experimentation left to those skilled in the art is unnecessarily and improperly extensive and undue.

Due to the large quantity of experimentation necessary to generate the infinite number of derivatives recited in the claims and possibly screen same for activity, the lack of direction/guidance presented in the specification regarding which structural features are required in order to provide activity, the absence of working examples directed to same, the complex nature of the invention, the state of the prior art which establishes the unpredictability of the effects of mutation on structure and function, and

the breadth of the claims which fail to recite any structural or functional limitations, undue experimentation would be required of the skilled artisan to make and/or use the claimed invention in its full scope.

Claims 4 and 5 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as containing subject matter which was not described in the specification in such a way as to reasonably convey to one skilled in the relevant art that the inventor(s), at the time the application was filed, had possession of the claimed invention. Claim 4 is drawn to an isolated nucleic acid molecule comprising at least 24 contiguous bases of nucleotide sequence first disclosed in the NHP gene described in SEQ ID NO:6. Claim 5 is drawn to an isolated nucleic acid molecule comprising a nucleotide sequence that hybridizes under highly stringent conditions to the nucleotide sequence of SEQ ID NO:6 or the complement thereof.

The specification discloses SEQ ID NO:6 which corresponds to the DNA encoding protein NHP. Claims 4 and 5 are directed to encompass gene sequences, sequences that hybridize to SEQ ID NO:6, corresponding sequences from other species, mutated sequences, allelic variants, splice variants and so forth. None of these sequences meet the written description provision of 35 USC 112, first paragraph. The specification provides insufficient written description to support the genus encompassed by the claim.

Vas-Cath Inc. v. Mahurkar, 19 USPQ2d 1111, makes clear that "applicant must convey with reasonable clarity to those skilled in the art that, as of the filing date sought,

he or she was in possession of the invention. The invention is, for purposes of the 'written description' inquiry, whatever is now claimed." (See page 1117.) The specification does not "clearly allow persons of ordinary skill in the art to recognize that [he or she] invented what is claimed." (See Vas-Cath at page 1116.)

With the exception of SEQ ID NO:6, the skilled artisan cannot envision the detailed chemical structure of the encompassed polynucleotides, regardless of the complexity or simplicity of the method of isolation. Adequate written description requires more than a mere statement that it is part of the invention and reference to a potential method for isolating it. The nucleic acid itself is required. See Fiers v. Revel, 25 USPQ2d 1601, 1606 (CAFC 1993) and Amgen Inc. V. Chugai Pharmaceutical Co. Ltd., 18 USPQ2d 1016. In Fiddes v. Baird, 30 USPQ2d 1481, 1483, claims directed to mammalian FGF's were found unpatentable due to lack of written description for the broad class. The specification provided only the bovine sequence.

Finally, University of California v. Eli Lilly and Co., 43 USPQ2d 1398, 1404, 1405 held that:

...To fulfill the written description requirement, a patent specification must describe an invention and do so in sufficient detail that one skilled in the art can clearly conclude that "the inventor invented the claimed invention." Lockwood v. American Airlines, Inc. , 107 F.3d 1565, 1572, 41 USPQ2d 1961, 1966 (1997); In re Gosteli , 872 F.2d 1008, 1012, 10 USPQ2d 1614, 1618 (Fed. Cir. 1989) (" [T]he description must clearly allow persons of ordinary skill in the art to recognize that [the inventor] invented what is claimed."). Thus, an applicant complies with the written description requirement "by describing the invention, with all its claimed limitations, not that which makes it obvious," and by using "such descriptive means as words, structures, figures, diagrams, formulas, etc., that set forth the claimed invention." Lockwood , 107 F.3d at 1572, 41 USPQ2d at 1966.

An adequate written description of a DNA, such as the cDNA of the recombinant plasmids and microorganisms of the '525 patent, "requires a precise definition,

such as by structure, formula, chemical name, or physical properties," not a mere wish or plan for obtaining the claimed chemical invention. *Fiers v. Revel* , 984 F.2d 1164, 1171, 25 USPQ2d 1601, 1606 (Fed. Cir. 1993). Accordingly, "an adequate written description of a DNA requires more than a mere statement that it is part of the invention and reference to a potential method for isolating it; what is required is a description of the DNA itself." *Id.* at 1170, 25 USPQ2d at 1606.

Therefore, only SEQ ID NO:6 but not the full breadth of the claims meet the written description provision of 35 USC 112, first paragraph. The species specifically disclosed are not representative of the genus because the genus is highly variant. Applicant is reminded that *Vas-Cath* makes clear that the written description provision of 35 USC 112 is severable from its enablement provision.

The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

Claim 5 rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. Claim 5 is drawn to an isolated nucleic acid molecule comprising a nucleotide sequence that: (a) encodes the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO:7; and (b) hybridizes under highly stringent conditions to the nucleotide sequence of SEQ ID NO:6 or the complement thereof. Stringency is relative, and the art does not recognize a single set of conditions as stringent. The specification also does not provide an unambiguous definition for the term. In the absence of a recitation of clear hybridization conditions (e.g., "hybridizes at wash conditions of A X SSC and B

% SDS at CoC"), the claims fail to define the metes and bounds of the varying structures of polynucleotides recited in the claimed methods.


GARY KUNZ
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER
TECHNOLOGY CENTER 1600

Conclusion

No claims are allowed.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Regina M. DeBerry whose telephone number is (703) 305-6915. The examiner can normally be reached on Mondays-Fridays 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Gary Kunz can be reached on (703) 308-4623. The fax phone numbers for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned are (703) 872-9306 for regular communications and (703) 872-9307 for After Final communications.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is (703) 308-0196.



RMD
November 1, 2002